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THE PRINCIPLES AND MAXIMS ON WHICH THE  
SECURITY AND HAPPINESS OF A  
REPUBLIC DEPEND :

# A SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
GOVERNOR, THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR, THE COUNCIL,  
AND THE TWO HOUSES COMPOSING  
THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

MAY 29, 1811,

BEING THE DAY OF GENERAL ELECTION.

.....  
BY THOMAS THACHER, A. M. A. A. S.  
Pastor of a Church in Dedham.  
.....

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BOSTON,

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

IN SENATE, MAY 30, 1811.

ORDERED, That the Honorable Messrs. JOHN HOWE, JOHN WELLES, and SAMUEL DAY, Esquires, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. THOMAS THACHER, and in the name of the Senate to thank him for the sermon delivered before His Excellency the Governor, His Honor the Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Council, and the two branches of the General Court, and to request a copy thereof for the press.

*Attest,*

MARCUS MORTON, *Clerk of Senate.*

[A few passages are printed, which were necessarily omitted in the delivery, from want of time.]

# SERMON.

JUDGES VIII. 23, 24.

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian." And Gideon said unto them, "I will neither rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."

GRATEFUL to every pious mind are those *solemnities*, when the rulers of the people repair to the temple of Almighty God, that they may obtain light and guidance in the discharge of their duty—not less pleasing to the patriot is the return of that day, in which the standard of national sovereignty and independence is demonstrated—and joyful to every private citizen is it to contemplate, that he is a part of that community, which shares her natural rights and privileges equally to every member.

America excepted, such a spectacle is not to be seen in any part of the habitable world. Civil liberty, at least in its perfect form, is banished from all its seats in the civilized earth. Contemplating the blessings we receive from a constitution, which preserves with equal justice, the persons of the poor from the oppression of the rich, and the property of the rich from the violence of the poor, and extends the benignity of its laws, not only to the native, but the stranger; we will not cease to offer a tribute of praise to that Supreme Being, whose extraordinary bounty has kept us from those chains by which all mankind are held in bondage; and has in past time so happily delivered us from danger and ruin, that we almost seem to enjoy the privilege possessed by the Jews, of being under the direct influence and authority of the Deity himself.

—What can better direct our thankful devotions at this time than the passage of sacred history, from which our text is selected, and how can we better conform to the design of the occasion than by making such reflections of a practical and moral kind, as may be elicited from its sense and spirit.

The text exhibits a mind superior to all the corruption and blandishments of fortune; to the most fascinating form, by which man can be tempted by ambition. The crowns and thrones of successful conquerors, and fortunate usurpers vanish into nothing before such exalted virtue and sublime patriotism: But we will not enlarge on the other actions of Gideon, as that theme has been lately pre-occupied. It will be sufficient to point out these traits of his life, from which we shall collect our present subject.

Gideon had by his wisdom and valour delivered his country from rapacious plunder and cruel slavery. The people of the land, probably in their general assembly, made a solemn tender to him and his posterity of the government, in return for the publick services, received from him, in the defence and protection of their country. By this act the form of their government was to be changed from a free republic to an absolute hereditary monarchy. But, happily for the nation, the purity, and magnanimity, and elevation of their hero, was above all desire of royalty. He replied on the spot, *I will neither rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; but the Lord shall rule over you.* In order to perceive the worth and value of the character of Gideon, the manner of his refusal should be considered. A crown and throne were freely offered him by the whole nation. For the honor of human nature, instances have recurred of heroes and statesmen, who have abstained from seizing upon the liberty of their country, when it was within their grasp; and who have had too much honor and fidelity to be

guilty of treachery and fraud to that people by whom they had been employed and caressed. Still, however, had a voluntary offer been made them of the government of their country, they would probably have considered the acceptance of it as no crime. But the instances are rare indeed, in which sovereign power, tendered by a whole nation, has been absolutely refused. This is a single example from sacred history of such magnanimity, and therefore the pre-eminent virtue of Gideon is the more worthy of our conspicuous regard. His name will be remembered, as long as those sacred volumes exist in which his virtues are recorded.

As example is more forcible than precept, we have selected this passage of sacred history to introduce our discourse. Even when such a sublime character is but briefly pictured out, the imperfect portrait is still adapted to fill the mind with generous and noble ideas. We shall take occasion from the language uttered by this great and good man, to point out the duties and maxims, necessary to be observed by a free people, if they wish to continue a pure republic—such I mean, as was referred to by Gideon in his answer to the people of Israel; that is, the Almighty governing a nation, through the medium and instrumentality of its best and wisest citizens.

I am sensible that a discourse on republican government and the advantages of civil liberty will be considered by many as a thing *born out of due time*. But though the subject may be to some disagreeable, and to others obsolete; yet apology may be offered, why the speaker is entitled to your patience and toleration. If at the close of autumn or the commencement of winter, you were presented with early summer fruits, which had been carefully preserved from decay, you certainly would give yourselves the trouble to examine them as a curiosity, though so unseasonable, that they were by no means agreeable to your taste. These



topics have an equal right to a fair and patient hearing as the attack or defence of party opinions; or the eulogy or reprobation of the past or present administration of our government. While therefore we point out, as we have proposed, the duties and maxims necessary for a free nation, we shall endeavor to exemplify them by the language and conduct of ancient lawgivers and sages, to describe the failure and violation of those principles, and notice some of those errors which have been fatal to former nations. The application of the sentiment will be left to the discernment of the hearer. We think this method will free us from the charge of irreverence to any class or section in the community. The venerable legislators here present will pardon a well intended effort, though the execution of it be weak and ineffectual.

Before we enter on our subject, it will be necessary to attend to a few preliminary observations. In the first place, we shall give you a definition of what we conceive to be a pure and correct republic. In the second place, we shall point out a few of those physical and local advantages, which are of great importance in forming and perpetuating such a system.

On the first topic, we will be as brief as possible. The words "republic," or "republican government," are very vague, and often used very differently by different classes of mankind.

Passing over without minute comment the definitions of jurists and civilians, we shall give our own in the most simple language. We shall barely mention a few explanations of the term, which we reject, e. g.— "A republic is called a government of laws and not of men." But this may imply the vilest species of tyranny; for the laws themselves may be so cruel and arbitrary, that the more strictly they are executed, the greater the calamity to the subject. Such were the laws of Draco among the Athenians; some of the laws



of Sparta ; such were those of Venice, and of the United Provinces of Holland in recent times. Under these forms, though dignified by the epithet of republican, personal liberty was more restricted and violated, than under common monarchies. Nor had the subject any reason to wish for their continuance, as there were no motives of interest or affection to excite his obedience. Another definition which has been given, is, " A government arising from the annual election of the whole people." Yet this definition is liable to just exception ; for it presupposes the majority to have supreme and uncontrolled dominion. If the majority are corrupt and wicked, they will trample on a part of their fellow citizens, and exhibit as severe and destructive cruelty, as that which usually follows the abuse of regal power. Instances arose frequently of such abuse of power in the primary assemblies in ancient republics. Again— " A nation may be called a republic when admitted nominally to elect its chief." Such was the government of Rome in the time of the Emperors. It is not difficult to divine where the lot would fall. A victorious General, after destroying the substance, would soon annihilate the very forms of a commonwealth. The people, flattered with the power of choosing their ruler, are a machine skilfully used by him in riveting their own chains, and confirming despotic power over the latest generations.

Rejecting the above definitions, we shall attempt to explain our own idea of a pure and genuine republic. A free government is that, which in all its parts arises directly or indirectly from the people. It implies a compact or covenant to which all its members are jointly and severally bound. All the grades of society are protected in their rights, and defended by the fixed principles of a constitution from the obtrusion and violence of each other. Though in a pure republic, the greater must govern the less ; yet the latter have a right

to appeal to the *common covenant*, the authority of which must be final. Though the legislature, like the Senate of Rome, may appear to be an assembly of Gods by the high powers and functions committed to their care and cognizance; yet they must conform to the constitution, or their laws will be rejected and refused by the tribunals of justice. The latter are, however, very far from invading the province of the former. They have no other powers of opposing the Senate, than those by which Omnipotence itself is supposed to be restricted, i. e. by wisdom and goodness; by known and settled laws, which are a rule both to the creature and creator. Should those laws which are against the covenant be presented to the judge, his answer will be, "Legislators, I venerate your dignity, I enforce obedience to all your legal commands; but command me to do what is possible." Should the judge, on the other hand, violate the laws, and dictate by tyranny and caprice, he would be stripped of his robes by the legislature, and exposed to the contempt and vengeance of his countrymen. Thus in a pure republic, there is no power but what is controulable: its distinct parts are carefully preserved, and the one portion of it is a check on the other. In a word, we cannot close our definition of a pure republic better than in the language of inspiration, "*It is the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.*"

2. We shall enumerate a few of the physical and local advantages, which are of importance in forming and perpetuating a system of pure republicanism.

First. A salubrious air and climate, a territory under the temperate zone, are circumstances very favorable for forming and continuing a free republic. The nations of the south and of the east have from the earliest period been subjected to absolute power. Even when

the cruelty of their tyrant has become intolerable, all the object they seek, in taking him off, is a gentler master. A warm climate weakens equally the vigor of the body and the energies of the mind. The facility with which the thrones of Asia have been shaken by hordes of northern barbarians, is a clear demonstration of my remark. Nor are the frigid zones more favorable for acquiring and preserving civil liberty. Some vestiges, however, of freedom, have been found among them; but through the ruggedness of their soil and their poverty, they have been compelled to emigrate to happier regions. Their valour is either enervated by a new climate, or spent in conquering for their military chief. In fact, the records of the northern regions, (the German tribes who conquered England and France in the fourth and fifth centuries being excepted) any more than those of the south, do not form an exception to the principle we have advanced.

Secondly. A relative situation as to other nations, sufficiently remote to prevent the republic from falling a prey to more powerful enemies, is another of these physical advantages, which are greatly to be desired. Under this head we include extent of territory, sufficient to constitute an independent and sovereign state. Small republics have existed, have flourished for a time, and have left such imperishable monuments of their wisdom and valor, as will be coeval with the universe. But yet the brilliant figure they exhibited was of short duration. The best condition they experienced was, when under the direction of some favored citizen, at whose death their fortune was eclipsed. It may be said that corruption, faction, and a licentious spirit were the causes of their ruin: we admit that they did accelerate it; but a very small free state, surrounded by mighty empires, though continuing uncorrupted, united and virtuous, would harbor in itself the seeds of political death.

To be free entirely, however, from the danger of rival states, is an extreme equally to be dreaded. When foreign enemies vanish, domestic foes arise not less to be deprecated. Peace and long prosperity corrupt a free people. Above all are such states exposed, in a long peace, to the malignant spirit of their own citizens, whose grandeur and emolument are the primary motive of action; the principles of justice, the dignity and happiness of their country, are but subordinate considerations. When the states of Greece had defeated the king of Persia, they fell into feuds and faction, and finally, by the influence and means of ambitious and unprincipled partizans, perished in their own corruption. When Rome had conquered Carthage, the people became contaminated by luxury; and after being awhile the prey of contending factions, they were irrecoverably enslaved. Similar causes will produce similar effects: Can we contemplate the local situation of the United States, and not rejoice that she has a Carthage on the north and on the south? May those who govern our nation never be influenced by the cruel and pernicious maxim of Cato the elder, nor imagine it our interest and happiness to depress and totally ruin a weak and falling rival.

Thirdly. National genius is an important advantage to a free state. Such natural abilities and dispositions, I mean, as will excite them to cultivate their minds, and promote and patronize learning and science. Athens and Thebes were nearly alike as to climate, soil, territory, and form of government. Yet the difference of national character was excessive. In the former, martial renown, arts, sciences and refinement, were exhibited in the highest perfection, for more than a century; the glory of the latter, entirely warlike, was confined to the short life of two illustrious men, Pelopidas and Epaminondas. These "*lights shining in a dark place,*" gave a temporary fame to their nation. When they

were extinguished, Thebes sunk and rose no more. Unless such genius and dispositions exist in a people as excite them to promote knowledge and useful arts, the education of youth will be neglected; universities and primary schools will be unknown; the people at large will fall into ignorance and barbarism; the worth and value of their civil privileges will be disregarded; and however brave and virtuous, without light and information they will fall a prey to the delusion and fraud of a domestic usurper, though superior to every open enemy.

We proceed to enumerate the maxims by which a free republic will preserve its rights and lengthen its existence.

1. It is necessary that they should be imbued with the spirit of religion, and cultivate its practice. Without a belief of the general and leading principles of religion, such as the existence of a God, and a future state, no laws or penalties would have efficient influence on mankind. Omitting to enlarge on the importance of religion in exciting fear in the human heart of temporal judgments; passing by its high authority in communicating sanctity to oaths, and in restraining that chain of offences, which human laws can neither punish nor describe; we affirm it is of the utmost importance in softening the ferocious passions of men, and collecting them together in friendly society. The habit of meeting in temples for common acts of piety, creates in the human mind an affection and benevolence towards its own species. If this effect be perceived from religion, when intermingled with superstition and debased by enthusiasm, how much more important must it be, when received among mankind pure and simple from the hand of Deity? But I need not add any further argument on its importance: we have embraced the christian system; we have been educated in its principles; and we are, I trust, influenced by its hopes.

2. Public manners and morals are objects of great consequence, and therefore merit the close attention and regard of civil rulers. I mention manners first because they are most obvious to the inspection of lawgivers and magistrates, and from public usage and taste, the state of morality can be infallibly ascertained. When it is well known, that public contempt and execration pursue a citizen remarkable for intemperance, lewdness, uncourteous behavior, avarice and cruelty, many a wretch is restrained, whom no correct principles could guide, or even penalties terrify. It is a great mistake to suppose, that fierceness of nature, roughness of manners, and ignorance of refined and civilized life, are certain tokens of integrity, or are absolutely necessary to preserve the virtue and liberty of a republic. Were the Athenians less brave than the people of Sparta? Were they more corrupt in the essentials of morality? Yet among the former we find nothing of that savage and barbarous conduct which some have mistaken for virtue. e. g. The people of Athens never inebriated their slaves in order to teach temperance to their children. Neither did they permit their young men to stab these unresisting men in order to learn the art of ambuscade. They disdained to receive protection from their valor in the field, crown them as conquerors with garlands, and then assassinate them, lest they should recover their personal liberty. These arts were peculiar to Lacedemon. Contrast the above with the humanity and delicacy of that people, who capitally punished a citizen for killing a sparrow flying for shelter to his bosom. What a lesson against treachery? What a high regard to hospitality? "We are surprised at the punishment," said Montesquieu, "but the question related to a judgment of manners, in a republic founded on manners.

We do not mean to eulogize either romantic sentiment or excessive refinement; nor do we wish that

luxury and the tinsel of life should supersede the useful arts and the manly virtues; but we affirm, that courage, frugality, and undeviating integrity, may be cultivated and esteemed among a free people, without their being obliged to banish all the charities of social life, and assume the brutality and fierceness of the savage. In a word, amiable manners ought to place their foundation on pure virtue: if not, they are shadow without substance: and “as all the arts and sciences are connected by a common bond;” so pure morals and the graces are and ever ought to be inseparably united. *What God hath joined let not man put assunder.*

3. Ardent patriotism is to be inculcated and encouraged by a people, who wish to perpetuate a pure commonwealth.

Whatever philosophers may pretend to the contrary it is plain and beyond contradiction, that attachment to native soil, and the ideas associated with it in the mind from early days is at least one part of this virtue. We affirm not that it is the whole; but yet we think it important that such affections should be strong, in order to the performance of the duties of a good citizen. Will not the patriot love that earth, on which he first drew the vital air, and beheld the light of heaven? Will not the same soil become sacred when he considers, that it embraces the dearest relations of life, such as parents, children and wife; that it is the centre of his hopes and fortunes; that contains in its bosom the ashes of his ancestors, and on its surface the temples of his God? Cold indeed is that heart, which can separate these several subjects, and in affecting general philanthropy undervalue those objects, which command the first love and veneration of every good man. It is not enough to say, that such a heart is unqualified for the charities of life; we affirm it must be the seat of turpitude and cruelty. The galley slave is attached to the oar, to which he is chained; the peasant to the field, in which



he has labored for a rapacious master; and even the mendicant is grateful to the barn or cottage, in which he had refuge from the storm. We know that even in the last moments of existence there is a satisfaction in dying in our own home, and casting a "long and lingering look" on the objects we have loved, when our eyes are about to be sealed in silence and perpetual sleep.

*Cœlumque*

*Aspicit et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.*

If our country be so dear for the sake of some trifling enjoyments, yea when it is the place of our misery and disgrace, how much more is it to be loved and esteemed, when it presents us with peace and plenty, dignity and freedom? Ought not the health, the fortunes, and the honors, yea the life itself of a good man to be cheerfully sacrificed for its preservation? What indignation is too great against those, who would sell their country to gratify their avarice and ambition, their spleen and revenge? Against those, who would not only strip her of her opulence and greatness; but deprive her of her liberty, clothe her in sackcloth, and level her glory in the dust? But I need not enlarge on this head, there is not an honest heart on earth, which does not beat in unison with these sentiments.

4. There are two cautions to be observed by a free commonwealth; the first, that the people should not suffer their faithful servants to be ruined by worthless defaming demagogues; or in other words, that they should avoid precipitancy and a jealous temper: the other is, that they should not blindly and obstinately trust those popular chiefs, whose language is specious, but whose actions are reprehensible and justly exposed to suspicion. It ought ever to be presumed by a free people, that rulers feel an awful responsibility to their constituents; that they will adopt no measures but those which they imagine will be ultimately for the public

good. They should remember that a candid allowance is due to the imperious necessity which may compel the government to constitute a temporary to avoid a permanent evil ; that the existence of the community may in some cases depend on sit firmness in stemming the tide of popular clamor, and therefore that they ought to wait a reasonable time before they make inferences to its prejudice.

The extreme of blind confidence in favorites, and popular leaders, has proved not only highly injurious, but fatal to ancient republics. Enlightened by example, a free nation will perceive, that not only "to err," but to commit crimes from the blackest design is a part of the human character.

"*The \*kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them,* are a bait too strong, when the tempter goes a fishing ; he therefore who is able to resist it must be more than man." †"If laws are to be violated, let them be violated for the sake of empire." This language has been expressed and this conduct displayed by those, who in some stages of their life have rendered important services to their country ; but at last were seduced by the calls of ambition, and were unable to withstand the charms and blandishments of a crown and throne. Though the crime of ingratitude in free states be shamefully true in some instances ; yet the frequency of the facts and examples, of the liberty and independence of a free state having been given up to a popular leader, who requited the confidence of his countrymen with slavery and chains, will present some extenuation of their conduct. What man, from the qualities of private life, was more worthy confidence and public honors than Pisistratus the Athenian ? Yet this man overturned the liberties of his country. Was not Julius Caesar the best scholar, the bravest general, and the most accomplished and amiable gentleman of the age in which he lived ? Yet this man overturned the liberty of Rome, and left

\* Marchmont Nedham.

† Euripides.

her a prey to the vilest monsters ever clothed in human form.

5. A free state must guard against faction, and political intolerance. When the eyes of the people are solely directed to a triumphant faction, when their ears can hear no arguments but those which tend to its establishment in power, and the ruin and depression of its rival; they are ripe for ruin. All fair and independent opinions will be suppressed, and flatterers and traitors will be the objects of their confidence. Cherishing such vipers in their bosom, they will soon perish by the venom of their bite. *Political fanaticism and intolerance* are not usually so lasting; but they are as sanguinary and destructive as *religious*. In respect to the latter, we know what seas of blood have been shed by monsters assuming the habiliments of piety, and pretending a commission from the God of Mercy. Such men have made a trade of death; they have murdered their fellow creatures about vile and stupid sophisms, which no man of sense can believe. The noblest and purest system of religion has been belied and vitiated by these infuriated men, in order to build up superstition and destroy the freedom of enquiry. Too well have these incarnate fiends succeeded. They have destroyed, not only the most innocent, but the wisest and the brightest among mankind. They have destroyed social happiness, arts, sciences, and every thing valuable to civilized man. *Before them was the garden of God, and a desolate wilderness behind them.*

Such has been the effect of religious bigotry, directed by infamous priests. But is political intolerance more mild, or less cruel, in its consequences? Look into the annals of past ages and conviction will stare you in the face. The majesty of the laws have been prostituted to support the most wicked and abominable actions. The defenders of their country have expired on a gibbet. The rich die the victims of avarice, and

the poor are sacrificed to revenge : even the groans of commiseration over the dying and the dead are treason against political bigotry, and subject the heart of him who utters them to the knife of the assassin. The silent retreats of virtue do not screen their guest from the fangs of a ferocious partizan ; for even retiring virtue is a satire on the executioner of his country.

6. Foreign influence is an evil against which all free states should be scrupulously guarded. When it has once been admitted, is borne with patience and even complacency, it is an infallible token, that corruption has seized the vital part of the system ; and if it be not speedily checked, will hasten political death. The very symbols of sovereignty in a free state, never ought to be touched by the profane hands of a stranger. True and faithful citizens will treat the influence of a foreign power with the same resentment, that devotees would express, towards unhallowed feet, which press into the inner apartment of the temple of their God. Are their rights and sovereignty invaded by a tyrant ? Is their submission demanded ? Their sensibility is as keen (though restricted by more dignity and mercy) as that of the Greeks, who, when Xerxes had demanded earth and water in token of submission, ordered the herald to be buried alive in the ditch. The passions and prejudices of the people directed in favor of a foreign power, and in severe hostility to each other, are an engine of destruction more formidable, than a powerful army in the bowels of their country. They are better aids to an usurper, than all the pomp and grandeur with which his throne is surrounded ; yea, they are more formidable, than all the guards and satellites by which his person is protected.

7. A pure republic will ever be ready to pay high honors, and lasting marks of distinction to the memory of those illustrious men, who have either died for their country in the field of battle, or have been eminent

in the direction of her councils. No object can command more veneration, than a monument or statue of some uncorrupt dignified statesman, or some hero, who has fought and died, contending for his country. The aged feel a similar sensation, as in contemplating the bust of a protecting Deity; the youth, by reviewing the same venerated figure, are pointed to the road of honor and virtue. Could any one, I will not say a Greek, but even a barbarian of uncultivated mind, have seen the monument and the inscription over the grave of Leonidas and his soldiers, who devoted themselves at Thermopylae, without receiving great and noble sentiments by a divine afflatus? Truly impressive and awful was the spectacle. A lion carved out of stone to designate the chief; on a pillar, the names of that death-devoted band were written in a fair and legible character; at the basis was this significant, though concise inscription: "Declare, O stranger, to the Spartans, that we lie here in obedience to her sacred laws." How happy those states, who have citizens worthy of such record! But still more happy, when they understand and reward their merit, and establish such schools of honor and virtue for the rising generation. If fear of splendid talents prevent their possessor, while living, from receiving applause, lest they, united with ambition, should overturn public liberty; if it be necessary, from the same motive, to tear the laurel from the head of the brave soldier; if it be necessary to adopt the ostracism with regard to the hoary headed sage, to repel him from public honors and emolument to private life, to lessen the estimation of his merits, and to debase his fame; yet certainly even "politics in form, jealous of worth," can never suffer fear or envy to be carried to *the desolate chambers of the grave*. Even envy herself will not wish to extinguish the rays of glory, when ceasing to be scorched by her beams.

Is economy pleaded for neglecting the tribute of respect? The argument is somewhat similar in weight, *though the motive may be better* than the objection of a certain personage to the expense of the ointment poured on the body of Christ. *This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor.*

8. If a free republic is obliged to divest part of its citizens of their local advantages, and devote their hopes and fortunes to the common safety, it will equalize the loss on every part of the community. e. g. Is it expedient for the good of the whole state to destroy a single city. (I here refer not to the ravages of war.) Would it not be cruel and in the highest degree unjust to suffer all the inhabitants of that city to be turned houseless into the streets, to suffer them then to become mendicants, and subsist by charity? Would it be sufficient to inform them, that they suffered for their country, and that this honor was sufficient reward? Would it be just to permit others to live entirely at their ease and be freed from all obligation on the same account? The most absolute despotism may by the same mode of reasoning be defended.—When justice and equity are not distributed alike to every subject, the relations of government are annulled with that part of the community. We close our remarks on this head by observing, that any government, whether a republic or monarchy, which suffers one portion of its subjects to harrass and tyrannize over another, creates as many enemies as the number of individuals, who are degraded and oppressed; so that throwing truth and justice out of the question, on the motives of expedience and policy, it is best that laws and penalties should be equal; and that no member of society, either for his sentiments or on the pretext of public utility, should bear an unequal burthen.

We have now finished the observations, which we intended on the maxims and principles by which a pure republic is supported. The truth of the sentiments have been demonstrated, fully demonstrated by the history of mankind. Such events as those to which we have alluded, are busts and monuments over departed commonwealths and point out the virtues by which they rose, and the crimes by which they fell.— We repeat again, that we do not design to make application of these remarks to our own country and its rulers. Whatever public evils exist, are well known. Whatever errors have been committed are pierced by the keen eye of political inquiry. It is not the design of the speaker to offer any remarks, which shall add fuel to the fire of discord. Would to God that his feeble voice and influence might in the smallest degree abate its effect and render great and good men more charitable and reconciled to each other. Censure and eulogy, farther than dutiful notice of delegated power, he will equally avoid.

Yet in our closing remarks on this subject, we shall take the liberty, from the present state of our nation, to describe the sacred and moral obligations, which bind both rulers and people, to forget party animosity ; to be determined in the defence and salvation of their country ; and to know and promote no other interest, than that which will perpetuate its liberties, and increase its glory. The duties of the day demand some attention to topics of this sort ; nor will he, whom you have made your organ, shrink back from the labor, though sensible that a subject of this nature is extremely delicate, and however carefully touched, will scarcely exempt innocence and circumspection from blame and censure. It is, in a word, “ a theme (to borrow the language of the ancient poet) full of danger and accident, in its discussion you must tread over fires thinly covered with deceitful ashes.”



Our country seems destined by heaven for the residence of civil and religious liberty. It hath all those physical advantages, which in the beginning of our discourse, we attempted to shew are desirable for the preservation of a free state. Separated from the tyrants of the old world by the vast Atlantic, it never can be subdued by a foreign power, unless sacrificed by domestic treachery. The climate, genius and manners of the people and the general diffusion of knowledge among them, are all circumstances favorable to perpetuate our freedom; and added to these, our federal and state constitutions are the best yet devised by human wisdom. In a word, if we look into the history of man, we shall find ourselves so highly favored by heaven, that I do not know that it would be too bold, should we affirm, that as God bestowed his richest bounty in the order of his grace, when that holy system was promulgated, in which there was *peace on earth, and good will to men*: so the country, form of government, and other advantages we enjoy, may be called the richest donation ever received by mortals in the order of his natural providence. If even mercy itself, personified in the holy and divine Citizen of Nazareth, will reject and consign to an awful destiny, those who spurn its offers; will not even *Divine Goodness*, beholding its richest temporal favors spurned by an ungrateful, turbulent and incorrigible nation, not only withdraw all its protection, but after suffering them for a while in awful convulsions and discord to sail over the tempestuous sea of liberty, at last sink them into the bottomless gulph of despotism.

In the next place, I earnestly call on my fellow citizens of every description, not to *despair of the commonwealth*; i. e. that amid the licentiousness, and confusion to which our form of government is exposed, that we should never give up the idea of preserving our natural rights and privileges. It is with

pain and anguish more than language can utter, that we hear many of different political classes, expressing sentiments of this kind, i. e. "That our republican government cannot be of long duration; that the licentiousness, which necessarily follows the use of liberty, will unavoidably end in despotism;—It is therefore advisable for wise and prudent citizens, either to yield to the storm of popular passion, and by a kind of assentation lessen its force; or else to embrace the first opportunity of establishing a government in a single person so energetic, that neither popular zeal nor malice can impugn or affect its operation; that if there be evils attending the exchange, still they are objects of calculation, and though severe, yet are tolerable."

But though the calamities which befall society in the last agonies and throes of a republic, are terrible: yet they are of short duration, and they are magnified by the keen feelings of freemen beyond the life. They are not greater than those which are constantly experienced by a nation of slaves. It may be truly said, that men give themselves too soon to despair, where the evils of which they complain might be removed by firmness and patience, and public liberty be restored. To a Roman the factions of Clodius and Milo appeared so terrible, that while suffering the evils they inflicted, he was tempted to prefer any government rather than that of a commonwealth: But was his condition mended under the proscription of Octavius and Antony? If we feel indignant when a licentious demagogue inflames the human passions, and rises to the highest honor by a political storm; how should we bear a confirmed despot, to whose will all our lives and fortunes would be subjected? How can we bear the thought, that our property must be seized to satisfy the pomp and luxury—and the blood of our youth sacrificed to gratify the ambition of an insolent usurper? If we cannot bear with the

licentiousness and defamation of party leaders and their transient tyranny, how could we bear the iron hand of a despot, who prohibits the liberty of the press and of speech ; with whom an audible groan is treason ; and under whose dominion death, the dread of man in common cases, is the only hope and the last refuge of the friendless ?

In the next place, we ought to guard against discord and political intolerance. The transition from intolerance and licentiousness to absolute tyranny is short and natural. Charity is as much needed at the present day in civil, as in religious affairs. Even zeal on these subjects, although its motives may be pure and correct, is extremely dangerous. It is the duty of the people to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*. Let each member of the community *judge and think for himself*. What is said of the test of a religious, may be said of a political profession : *by its fruits ye shall know it*. The man, who rejects the maxims of truth and honor, when he throws off the charities of private life in the vehemence of party feeling, will never be found a true friend to his country ! If a people deem *him* their *enemy, who tells them the truth*, they must never expect fair and useful investigation ; they will give themselves up devotedly to those who will please them at the expense of their ruin.

We are alas ! at the present day a divided people. Should the passions and prejudices of each section of the community against each other increase for a few years to come, as they have for a short time past, we shall not want the arm of a foreign tyrant to destroy us. In fact, without a miracle, unless a spirit of conciliation and benevolence supercede our present habits of thinking, we shall fall into a state of civil war ; the most tremendous evil which can befall mankind.

Our ruin however can come only from ourselves : but is it therefore less certain, or will it be less destructive ? It is true, we believe, that the enthusiasm of the day very generally arises from an honest heart : but even that fact may render it more terrible. Even the " skilful leader, who raises the whirlwind, cannot direct or modify the storm." Like the torrent breaking forth from the mountain, the passions of party will destroy every obstruction, and render vain every attempt to correct their progress. Nothing can quiet them, but the immediate power of Him, *who stillest the raging of the sea, and who guideth the tumult of the people.*

Let it be a subject of our first care, that we preserve our holy constitutions of government free from every violation : and that we transmit the rights and laws contained in them, as a legacy to our posterity. When we consider their worth and value, ought we not to guard them with that circumspection and distrust, which will entirely defeat the arts, as well as prevent the violence of such as attempt their destruction ? What punishment would be sufficiently severe for the man, who from motives of avarice, ambition, spleen and revenge, would sacrifice his country to any foreign or native usurper ? In the catalogue of crimes, in the epithets by which the vilest sinners are designated, there are none sufficiently strong to describe such atrocity and turpitude. The owner of a heart black enough to ruin America and its liberties would have had no scruples in piloting the devil to the garden of Eden. Let such a wretch, if such exist, receive the reward of his treachery by the stripes of a cruel task-master till his back be as callous as his soul. Let him run as a captive slave before the triumphal chariot of a tyrant. Let him be the accursed herald to summon his fellow citizens to the funeral of their country.

We reprobate the idea that America has, or can produce such a monster. We believe and are persuaded,

that there are great and good men of very different opinions. We assert that even of those, who strongly imbibe the feelings of party, and are injured by their influence, there are many who would joyfully receive "the spoiling of their goods," and who would be ready to seek death in the field, were their services required; yea, from a principle of honor and fidelity to the interests of their country, they would "witness a good confession," on the scaffold, or at the stake.

Of those called republicans, and those denominated federalists, we presume there are not ten in a thousand through the United States, who would not reprobate the idea of our being subjected to Great Britain or France; but still sharp and terrible contests, like those of the present day, may impel men to measures, the tendency of which, in their cooler moments, they would execrate.

In contemplating the calamities of the present day, we beg the liberty to suggest a few ideas to the people and rulers, which we hope will not procure the displeasure of either; even if thought of little moment, or even contrary to their opinion.

To the first, we warmly recommend a candid and patient disposition towards those who are placed in authority; that they make allowance for the very difficult situation in which the United States are placed, as far as they have any foreign relations; that they should remember that even in adopting measures, which are disgusting and calamitous, our rulers may imagine they substitute a lesser for a greater evil; and that in applications for relief, with the manly and dignified sentiments of freemen, that respect and decorum should be observed which ever will be paid by wise and good men to those who are clothed with constitutional authority.

Rulers, on the other hand, are respectfully reminded, that as it is a principle adopted in our constitution, and which never will be given up but with life itself:

“That the people under God are the origin of all power,” so the decent and temperate complaints or remonstrances of any part of the community have a claim to a fair, impartial hearing; and, if necessary to refuse, yet let it be done with such paternal tenderness and affection, that even the afflicted shall be satisfied that the governors have a common interest with the governed; that they sympathize with their tears; that they are elevated with their hopes. There was one custom formerly in use, but which has been wholly laid aside by every administration of the federal government since the adoption of the constitution, i. e. that of the general legislature addressing their constituents in a public manner. The effects of such conduct were as happy as they were surprizing, in the revolutionary war. They not only enabled the government to call forth all the physical energies of the people, but reconciled them to that extreme temporary distress, which was necessary in defending their country. Not the most confirmed monarchical government could have procured such powerful, proportional aid as were then offered by freemen for the support of a just and honorable war. How important such a mode of administration at a day when there are sacrifices required, falling very heavily on some parts of society. How desirable that those who suffer should be convinced of their importance, and thoroughly reconciled to suffer temporary evils for the sake of a lasting benefit. Even the mere expression of such benevolence and friendship, would conciliate, if it did not convince; and it would allay the heat of parties, and unite the people for their common safety. This is surely a consummation devoutly to be wished at the present day.

We hear many at the present day, in party appeals, express their wishes that the spirit and feeling of the year 1775 might be revived. Would to God that the real spirit and principles of that era did now exist.

That spirit was LIBERTY PERSONIFIED, *we beheld and we admired its glory*: that spirit was as just and merciful, as it was ardent and invincible. In that part of the scene exhibited in this commonwealth, it was splendid and truly honorable to human nature. The restrictions of religion and honor, the chaste and correct manners of the populace, were a security to every individual, both of life and property, when laws and tribunals were prostrated in the dust. Before war had openly and fairly commenced not a victim was exposed to death for opposing public opinion, nor yet for obnoxious and irritating conduct. The blood of no partizans stained our streets; no defenceless women and children were either slain or turned naked into the streets; no houses were wrapt in flames, finally there were no spectacles, at which ordinary wickedness would recoil, presented before the American people. Mistaken citizens, confessing their faults, were received into friendship; and some of them, both in our councils and armies faithfully served their country, and richly merited its forgiveness. A spirit of order and gravity marked the general features of the people; there was a zeal and patriotism, which though warm, was regulated by knowledge and by charity. The effects were such as were desired by every honest man; each hostile invader was repelled from our country; our nation threw off the form as well as substance of foreign dependence, and our virtues as well as the courage of our armies contributed to secure us a rank among the sovereigns of the world.

Might not America expect the same happy effects, could her sons lay aside that dissension, be clothed with the same moderation and candor, and feel the same holy fire of patriotism! Should the whole country unite in resisting foreign aggression of every description, our calamities would soon terminate, and under the common smiles of Providence, we should enjoy a higher



degree of honor and prosperity, than we have yet experienced. Every external foe would find to his cost, that he was invading a land possessed by freemen, who would brook neither injury nor insult. Our executive and senates would hold in their breast the destiny of nations, and would mark the courses of their prosperity and depression, as the public interest required. Even should that tremendous conqueror, whose crimes and triumphs appear almost to our impatient minds to impeach the tardy justice of Heaven, attempt the conquest of the United States, by dear bought experience he would be convinced, that the divine spirit of freedom cannot be destroyed by numerous and disciplined armies, even when flushed with victory, and conducted by a leader, inspired by fortune herself.

Contemplating the duty we owe our country, and our awful responsibility to future ages, are we not all under the highest obligation to promote peace and conciliation, and use every effort to extinguish the torch of discord? Ought there to be any other emulation existing, than to decide who shall best love and most faithfully serve the community of which he is a member? The man, who should effect so important a good as the conciliation of parties, would richly deserve the epithet of saviour of his country. I am firmly persuaded, that we shall want neither leaders nor examples in this godlike undertaking. May we not hope from the candor, moderation, and past services of that great man, who presides over the United States, that he will not only approve, but lend both his splendid talents and high influence in so laudable a design? Will not his colleague co-operate with him in an act which will place a laurel on his aged temples more brilliant than those, with which he was adorned in the revolutionary war? May we not expect that those distinguished statesmen and hoary headed sages, who have presided over and have directed the councils of America, will render

every aid in perfecting such a glorious labor? Ye war-worn veterans, "whose aged temples are covered with the blossoms of the grave!" Your lacerated country once preserved by your valor, again demands your powerful aid. She asks you to heal her wounds, to substitute peace for party; she has full confidence in your honor and good affection, whatever difference there may be in your opinions. May you not die till such a happy event is completed—Have we not every reason to hope for the auspices of that illustrious citizen, on whom this day, the republic of Massachusetts has bestowed her highest honors? This commonwealth has largely reaped the fruit of his labors in supporting her claims against other parts of the union; and all the United States have witnessed his regard for their happiness in negotiations at a foreign court. Besides these past pledges, we may add his moderation, his urbanity to every description of citizens. But it is superfluous to solicit; the well known disposition of His Excellency are such, that if any degree of union can be promoted by his exertions, he will rejoice in the opportunity of bestowing them.

The sagacity—the mild qualities of our second magistrate, whose liberal soul has devised liberal things, whose opulence has enabled him to cultivate the same generous dispositions, are a demonstration that he will afford his efficient patronage.

Ought we not to hope for the same exertion in the great work of conciliation, from each member of the legislature? We offer our most fervent prayers, that this assembly of conscript fathers will pass this day an act of amnesty, obliterating every memorial of political rancor; and will have the high honor of laying a corner stone for the temple of concord, in the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

What spectacle more sublime and beautiful, than to see Americans thus become a band of brothers? Our

present afflictions and despondency would then vanish, like the foul spectres of the night at the dawning of the day. Our aged patriots and heroes, like holy Simeon, would be ready to sing their "*Nunc dimittis*," since they had seen the salvation of their country. Your ancestors, from their celestial seats, would receive additional delight in seeing the glory and happiness of their posterity. Even the sainted Washington, in the mansions of eternal day, could not avoid detaching his eyes from the splendors of the beatific vision, to see the serpent slain and the garden of Eden restored to the human race.

But I may not enlarge; your time and patience, honored fathers, have been already exhausted; I shall make no further demand on them except in commending you and your country to the care of heaven.—

Hear, O all powerful and beneficent Jehovah, our prayers, and votive offerings for the peace and prosperity of our nation. May the language uttered by the speaker, if true, and if proceeding from patriotism and a pure motive be received with approbation and kindness; if hurtful and designed to injure the community, may it be reprobated by the audience.

To thee, O searcher of hearts, he appeals: he calls on thee to witness his sincerity. Continue these solemnities, as well as the liberty, of which they are the pledge. Take our whole nation into thy holy keeping: and send forth thy light and truth among rulers and people. Detect and drag forth to the light all domestic traitors, expose them to the vengeance and execration of their countrymen. May the arm raised up to destroy our liberty wither like that of Jeroboam. May a swift destruction from Thee overtake every foreign power, who shall unjustly invade us. Grant, O Supreme Governor of the Universe, that our country may ever support its sovereignty and independence: but if in the course of thine eternal destinies America

is doomed to be the inheritance of a tyrant ; grant, we beseech thee, that it may first become the sepulchre of its present inhabitants. Pull down the tyrants of the earth. Abolish personal as well as national slavery. Be a pillar of light to all the great defenders of mankind ; but scatter darkness and death in the way of the destroyer. Hasten the time, when thy sacred image shall no more be stained with blood to satisfy the ambition of wicked and unreasonable men ; and when thy holy child Jesus shall commence his reign over thy then renovated and glorious, though now unhappy and depressed offspring. AMEN.

THE following *Errata* were produced by the unavoidable rapidity with which the Discourse has passed through the press :

Page 9, line 11, for "they," read *their inhabitants* ; p. 9, l. 15, for "the," read *those of the* ; p. 9, l. 21, for "these," read *those* ; p. 9, l. 22, for "are," read *is* ; p. 10, l. 7, for "the," read *their* ; p. 11, l. 23, for "chain," read *train* ; p. 15, l. 5, for "their," read *its*.









